



## Application for Community Assistance

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program supports successful partnerships with communities across America in achieving their conservation and outdoor recreation visions.

Please follow the [application steps](#) on our website and then submit this completed application along with a map of your project site, at least three letters of commitment, and any other supplementary information that helps us learn more about your project to your National Park Service [Regional Program Manager](#) by August 1.

**Date:** July 30, 2015    **Project Name:** Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan

**Project Location Description:** The proposed Sky to Sound Water Trail begins on the north fork of the Skykomish River, east of the Town of Index, and on the south fork of the Skykomish River at the Town of Skykomish. It then proceeds downstream through the Town of Gold Bar and cities of Sultan, Monroe, Snohomish, and Everett. The trail terminates in Puget Sound, west of Everett in Possession Sound. (Please see attached map and matrix of known, corresponding waypoints)

**City and State:** Everett, WA

**Congressional District Numbers:** Washington State 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional Districts

**Applicant Organization:** Snohomish County

**Primary Contact:** Annique Bennett

**Title:** Strategic Tourism Coordinator, Office of Economic Development

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### **Project Description:**

1. Describe:
  - a) Your vision and summary statement of the overall project goal;
  - b) Tangible outcomes of the project (i.e. recreational opportunities developed, plan creation, development of ideas and goals, miles, acres);
  - c) Project accomplishments to date;
  - d) Support: governmental/organizational support/recognition; endorsements from elected officials and boards, etc.;
  - e) Community benefits that would result from implementing the proposed project (i.e. recreational opportunities in areas with little to no recreational access);
  - f) Geographic location of your project and characteristics of that location (rural, coastal, wetland, urban, specific areas within a city or county, etc.);
  - g) Important demographic characteristics of your project area that will benefit or be impacted with creation and/or addition of recreational opportunities.

## 1. Project Description

### A. **Your vision and summary statement of the overall project goal:**

The waterways of Snohomish County enhance the quality of life in our communities by generating outdoor recreation and tourism revenue for rural economies, enriching educational opportunities, and increasing environmental awareness about river ecosystems. Ideal waterway conditions and proximity to urban centers like Seattle make these rivers among the most popular and heavily recreated in the State of Washington. However, this demand necessitates increased access opportunities and stakeholder collaboration to direct future sustainable recreation development along the waterway.

Our vision is to develop an 84 mile water trail from the Skykomish River to Puget Sound (Sky to Sound Water Trail) that will promote safe and appropriate public access to the Skykomish and Snohomish waterways. The water trail begins on the north and south forks of the Skykomish River, flowing west and merging with the Snoqualmie River to become the Snohomish River, which flows out to the mouth of Puget Sound. To create the water trail, Snohomish County and its partners are seeking support from the Rivers, Trails, and Community Assistance (RTCA) Program to facilitate a collaborative planning process among many landowners, businesses, nonprofit organizations, agencies, and interested citizens to establish a robust Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan.

When complete, the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan will be a nonscientific and nonbinding document that provides a comprehensive development vision for the waterway. The final plan will guide, inform, and support future development and conservation choices. However, the control, maintenance, and management of the river will remain the responsibility of existing land managers, local governments, and private owners. The ultimate goal of the concept plan will be coordinated development efforts between all stakeholders to achieve the national water trail designation for the Sky to Sound waterways.

### B. **Tangible outcomes of the project (i.e. recreational opportunities developed, plan creation, development of ideas and goals, miles, acres):**

- **Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan:** A comprehensive document that will provide the strategic mechanism to propose and develop the 84 mile water trail between the rural communities in eastern Snohomish County to Puget Sound. This plan will result in:
  - An all-inclusive catalog and inventory of public and private access points and amenities.
  - Recommendations for strategic infrastructure improvements and amenities, such as parking, camping, sanitary facilities, and concessionaire stations. This will make the waterways more accessible for currently underserved populations such as groups with children or disabilities.
  - Compilation and increased availability of ecological and conservation analyses conducted along the waterways for agencies, landowners, and the public. This will help guide future development decisions.
  - Recommendations for enhanced educational opportunities and programming for the public and area youth.

- Recommendations for marketing and storytelling of the waterways—increasing activities relating to historic preservation, cultural investments, and tourism in the US-2 corridor communities.
- **Sky to Sound Advisory Committee:** The formation of an informed advisory committee that will make recommendations and implement the short and long-term goals of a water trail plan. This advisory body will have the capacity to maintain a vital network of partnerships, supporting positive interaction among the diverse audience of land managers, user groups, cities, and towns along the waterway.
- **National Water Trails System Designation:** By crafting the water trail concept plan and identifying necessary infrastructure improvements the stakeholders, and ultimately the advisory committee, hope to work toward a competitive application for recognition in the National Water Trails System.

### C. Project accomplishments to date:

The Sky to Sound Steering Committee that will craft the concept plan has already been formed and initially includes representatives from the US Forest Service, Washington State Parks, Snohomish County, Washington Department of Natural Resources, City of Sultan, City of Monroe, City of Snohomish, Town of Skykomish, the Sky Valley and Skykomish Chambers, American Whitewater, Forterra, and Outdoor Adventure Center of Index.

Many of the steering committee members already collaborate regularly through the Sky Valley Outdoor Recreation Planning meetings, which have occurred every other month for approximately four years. These meetings bring together key stakeholders and the public to share information and discuss recreation development projects that impact the region, including the waterways. By providing an avenue for regular communication, the meetings have reduced recreation user conflicts while increasing engagement in stewardship projects in the area. The Sky Valley Outdoor Recreation Planning meetings will serve as a channel for stakeholder outreach while forming the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan.

Examples of current projects that will relate to the proposed Sky to Sound Water Trail include:

- **Town of Skykomish:** Skykomish is working with Forterra, King County, and the USFS to develop new river access points in the upper Skykomish River. King County has also initiated acquisition of a key parcel that would provide public access.
- **Washington State Parks:** 1200 acres have been recently acquired by WA State Parks from the Department of Natural Resources along the banks of the North Fork of the Skykomish River. Soon, State Parks will begin to review its existing CAMP Plan and make determinations about water and camping along the acquired river frontage.
- **Town of Index:** Index has multiple access points to the north fork of the Skykomish River. However, two of the river access points were washed out in 2006, cutting off vehicle access via the Index-Galena Road to the Wild Sky Wilderness Area. Snohomish County, the Federal Highway Administration, the Forest Service, and Washington Department of Transportation have been working for nearly 10 years to restore access to the river and nearby trails to ensure the public can utilize the waterway in this biologically diverse wilderness area.

- **City of Sultan:** The city is currently working with Snohomish County Parks and Forterra on river access and the Sky Valley Trail project, which will connect existing trails with the Great Northern Corridor Project.
- **Snohomish County Parks:** The Parks Department has recently purchased riverfront property along the Skykomish River that adjoins Snohomish County Surface Water Management Division land. The total property, which is approximately 60 acres, will make up the future Steelhead County Park. Preliminary priorities for the park include water access and seasonal camping. The development of the park will likely begin with first phases in 2016.
- **City of Snohomish:** The city has recently acquired additional property along the Snohomish River and is opening a boat launch close to its historic downtown area.
- **City of Everett:** The city hosts several access points along the waterway and is developing extensive new residential and commercial areas along its riverfront, where new access points will likely be developed. Everett also has kayak access to the Snohomish River on Smith Island. In addition, the historic Lowell neighborhood is beginning greater riverfront development which will extend existing waterway trails.
- **The Port of Everett:** Extensive redevelopment is underway at the Port of Everett Marina, with planned public access to the waterfront and adjoining regional trail system. There may also be opportunities for new access points as planning continues on a new mixed-use neighborhood development.
- **WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW):** The WDFW has acquired and restored significant portions of the estuary in Everett, which provide aquatic and riparian habitats to numerous species of birds and other wildlife as well as important rearing areas for salmon. Trails along old dikes provide easy access for birding and scenery, adjacent to the river channels.

**D. Support—governmental/organizational support/recognition; endorsements from elected officials and boards, etc.:**

The Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan has received enthusiastic endorsement and letters of support from elected officials, recreation and conservation partners, and local chambers because the timing of the plan formation is so opportune with the many correlated development projects that are currently underway.

Letters of support for the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan from officials include:

- Congresswoman Suzan DelBene
- Congressman Rick Larson
- Senator Maria Cantwell
- Senator Patty Murray
- John Lovick, Executive, Snohomish County
- Dave Somers, Snohomish County Council Chair
- Ray Stephanson, Mayor, City of Everett
- Karen Guzak, Mayor, City of Snohomish
- Carolyn Eslick, Mayor, City of Sultan
- Ken Walker, City Administrator, City of Sultan
- Bruce Albert, Mayor, Town of Index
- Ann Darlington, President, Friends of Heybrook Ridge

Snohomish County recognizes the need for recreational infrastructure planning, which is included as priority in the countywide Strategic Tourism Plan (STP). The STP identifies the need for inter-jurisdictional and user group collaborations to develop partnerships along heavily used waterways and trails. Support for the development of this water trail has also been recognized by the state. In 1990 the Skykomish Scenic River Recreational Access Study, published by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission Scenic River Program, clearly established the need for a Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan by citing many of the same challenges regarding heavy river use and comprehensive planning seen today.

**E. Community benefits that would result from implementing the proposed project:**

Despite the popularity and heavy use of the rivers included in this proposal, no comprehensive document exists to show access points along the waterways. This generates user conflicts and safety hazards. For example, visitors will often make their own access points to the waterway through private property which is not intended or marked for river access. Frequently cars will park along narrow shoulders, and users will dash across highway traffic with their watercraft seeking put-in areas. Once users are on the river, appropriate take-outs are frequently hard to identify.

The water trail concept planning process will create an inventory for access according to types of river use and trip durations along the waterway. There are currently a total of 33 access points along the 84 miles of the proposed Sky to Sound Water Trail, with 23 designated for public access and three under private ownership. Seven of the access points are publicly owned, but not currently open for public access. Some communities, such as the City of Gold Bar, have been identified as in need of an access point but have been unable to establish one due to infrastructure or land issues.

The Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan will outline ways in which existing and potential sites can be developed or improved—specifically in reference to the determination of strategic distances between put-in and take-out areas as well as facilities which are needed for sanitation along this lengthy route. Currently, distances between access points and amenities are often too great to allow trips with larger groups, children, and individuals with disabilities to journey down the waterway. There are very few services, including camping, that are within a walkable distance to other facilities that would support recreation by these populations, especially young children.

Establishing a Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan will inform land owners and public agencies of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and limitations for development of new access along the waterway. The plan will help land managers and private owners that are working independently to collaborate in order to leverage resources for capacity and access development. These resources include provisions for additional parking, signage, camping and to plan distances between access points.

**F. Geographic Location of the project and location characteristics:**

The full length of the proposed trail is 84 miles, starting with the north and south forks of the Skykomish River flowing west, joining the Snoqualmie River to become the Snohomish River and Estuary. The waterway flows out to Possession Sound, on Puget Sound. The proposed Sky to Sound Water Trail runs through the rural towns of Skykomish and Index, past the cities of

Gold Bar, Sultan, Monroe, and Snohomish before reaching the urban center of Everett. The Skykomish River itself is the second-most boated river for paddle sports in the state, and was the first to receive the coveted State of Washington Scenic River designation. Due to its unimpeded waterways and unique conditions for access improvement, the Skykomish River is the natural starting point for the water trail and the concept planning process.

**G. Important demographic characteristics of the project area:**

The towns and cities in Snohomish County along US-2, including Sultan, Gold Bar, Monroe and Everett, have diverse, multi-cultural populations with a wide income distribution. The growing City of Monroe has a large Spanish speaking population, with approximately 17.1% Latino citizens and 24% Latino school-age children. Some of the smaller, more rural communities such as the City of Gold Bar have populations that fall below the state average in family income, per capita income, household income, and housing value. Even the largest city along the waterways, the City of Everett, reports median household incomes that fall more than \$10,000 below state average as well as a 17% poverty rate. In addition to local residents, people from urban centers such as Everett and Seattle, as well as the communities along the I-5 and I-405 corridors, journey into the mountains and waterways of Snohomish County for recreation year-round.

Many of the organizations represented on the Sky to Sound Steering Committee currently advocate for or provide educational programs targeted at local youth. New inter-agency partnerships between leaders can be developed that draw together active youth organizations like the YMCA and Boys of Girls Club of America, which already work with school-age children through afterschool programs. A Sky to Sound Water Trail can provide new environmental education opportunities for low income and minority children and their families. In addition, the information about indigenous species, water flow rates, and historic usage of the headlands by Point Elliot Treaty Tribes that will inform development of the concept plan can be used in community educational programs to deepen public understanding about the waterways.

**Applicant and Partner Roles:**

2. Answer:
  - a) Describe your role and the level of commitment/services your organization can provide to the project.
  - b) List the key partners involved with the project. Briefly summarize the existing or anticipated role and contribution of each partner.
  - c) Please include commitment letters from each partner listed in the application. Commitment letters should note the partner's support, list their anticipated project role, expected contribution(s), and responsibilities in the project.

**2. Applicant and Partner Roles**

**A. Describe your role and the level of commitment/services your organization can provide to the project:**

The applicant on this project is Snohomish County, specifically the Office of Economic Development (OED) and the County Parks Department. The OED manages implementation



of the Snohomish County Strategic Tourism Plan and employs a fulltime staff to oversee this work. The County Parks Department manages five properties along the waterway that are currently in various stages of development for public access. Collaboration between these departments will position the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan project to take advantage of County resources.

The OED Strategic Tourism Coordinator, Annique Bennett, will act as the administrative lead on the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan. This fulltime position functions as a project liaison between jurisdictions, agencies, departments, and organizations to support developing infrastructure projects for tourism as suggested in the Strategic Tourism Plan. Bennett has nearly a decade of experience managing stakeholder outreach, meetings, and community engagement. Currently, she is working with the Parks Department and steering committee to organize and compile data for the creation of the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan.

The Snohomish County Parks Department has also prioritized the development of this project, dedicating Senior Parks Planner Kevin Teague to take an active role as a subject matter expert and planning consultant. Teague is a licensed Landscape Architect with over fifteen years of park development experience and will provide mapping, property research, public process, and project management support needed to complete the concept plan. The staff resources that have been made available on behalf of Snohomish County will combine to connect rural communities with urban cities to improve quality of life for residents along the waterways.

**B. List the key partners involved with the project, summarize the contribution of each partner:**

The Sky to Sound Steering Committee includes representatives a wide range of government, nonprofit, conservation, and recreation groups that are associated with projects currently underway along the waterway. These committed partners will contribute resources and support to developing the concept plan in addition to contributions of technical information, maps, and detailed waterway information. This initial committee will grow as the planning process moves forward to include representatives of various recreational user and conservation groups.

**US Forest Service (USFS), Skykomish Ranger District:** The US Forest Service manages eleven access points along the proposed Sky to Sound Water Trail. Steve Kuennen, USFS Acting Forest Supervisor, and Andy Brayden, Soil and Water Program Manager, will serve on the Sky to Sound Steering Committee and provide technical information about managed sites and Point Elliott Treaty First Nations heritage lands. In addition to attendance at committee meetings, the USFS will support plan development by contributing to stakeholder outreach and consult on waterway access issues on behalf of the agency as needed.

**Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR):** Benjamin Hale, Cascade District Recreation Manager, will provide information about areas managed by the agency, including mapping and GIS assistance as well as other technical information. The DNR will also will support stakeholder outreach and consult on waterway access issues in addition to potentially providing matching funds for the development projects.

**Washington State Parks Wallace Falls:** WA State Parks Ranger Kevin Lease will contribute information needed to inform the concept planning process about future improvements to the popular “Big Eddy” put-in, and the “Old RV Park” access points. WA State Parks will provide information about updated camp plans and contribute needed technical information.

**Town of Skykomish:** Steve Koch, Town of Skykomish Parks Department Director, and Skykomish Chamber Director Henry Sladek will represent the community and businesses in Skykomish. Up to three new access points are proposed by the Town of Skykomish and are in various stages of discussion and planning. The town will provide meeting space, technical information, and a vital link with King County for the project.

**Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC) of Index:** Proprietors Blair and Bill Corson control three private access points along the waterway. The OAC will contribute paddle sport user group expertise, and aid in user group engagement. Bill Corson is the past president of the Washington Kayak Club. OAC will conduct planning site visits along the waterway and assist in outreach to local at-risk youth, including them in the water trail planning process as possible through paddle sport safety education and stewardship opportunities. The OAC will provide meeting space as needed.

**American Whitewater:** Dr. Thomas O'Keefe, Regional Director, will provide expert planning and technical assistance for the project. Dr. O'Keefe will also support the project by connecting the steering committee with additional resources and knowledgeable user groups. Dr. O'Keefe is the only steering committee member who has water trail development experience, recent plan development with the Upper Nooksack River.

**Forterra:** Lindsay Fromme, Community Engagement and Policy Director, will support public outreach and advise on policy as needed. In addition, Forterra will provide technical support, including mapping.

**City of Sultan:** City Councilman Bob McCarty will participate and provide information on behalf of the City of Sultan. The city is engaged in joint management of the Steelhead Park with Snohomish County and of Sportsman Park with the WA Department of Fish and Wildlife. Councilman McCarty will contribute to meeting support and provide interface with the Snohomish County Parks Board on behalf of the project. He is particularly interested in establishing consistent wayfinding signage and engaging disabled users in the water trail planning process. The City of Sultan hosts the Sky Valley Outdoor Recreation Planning meetings every other month.

**Sky Valley Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center:** Debbie Copple, Executive Director of the Sky Valley Chamber, will represent businesses in Sultan, Startup, Gold Bar, Baring, and east Monroe. Copple also serves on the boards for the Snohomish County Parks Advisory, Sultan Education Foundation, Cascade Loop Advisory, and Stevens Pass Greenway. Additionally, she facilitates the Sky Valley Outdoor Recreation Planning meetings and has connections with recreation and conservation groups as well as the federal and state



agencies that manage the waterways in the area. Copple will assist the Sky to Sound Steering Committee in outreach through the Sky Valley Chamber newsletter and website updates.

**City of Monroe Parks Department:** Parks Director Mike Farrell will participate in steering committee meetings as needed to provide updates about planned improvements to Al Borlin Park in Monroe. Farrell works extensively with community youth and will support efforts to connect children's programs in the Parks Department with educational opportunities in the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Planning process. The City of Monroe newsletter will announce updates and public meeting dates as they become available.

**City of Snohomish:** Debbie Emge, Director of Economic Development, will represent the City of Snohomish and its two river access points. She has nearly 20 years of experience in economic development and will lend her expertise to the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan development.

**City of Everett Parks Department:** A representative of the Everett Parks Department will participate as needed to provide updates about existing and potential access points in the City of Everett. The Parks Department will support the water trail planning process with technical expertise about these locations and support communication with Everett citizens.

### **C. Letters of Commitment:**

Please see the attached letters of commitment.

### **Public Support:**

3. Answer:
  - a) Describe the level of public support to date, and any plans for future public outreach, participation, and community inclusion.
  - b) Provide letters of support from three stakeholders.

### **3. Public Support**

#### **A. Describe the level of public support to date, and any plans for future public outreach:**

Notable interest and support for the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan has been expressed by the communities in Snohomish County, the State of Washington and federal level. Letters of support have been collected from local, county, and federal elected officials as well as land managers along the proposed Sky to Sound Water Trail. The plan has been well received because the timing aligns with many of the development efforts currently underway by these partners and supporters.

If the National Parks Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program grant for technical support is approved, the County will organize and host public workshops in communities along the waterways. These meetings will include targeted groups and collect information that the County will compile with RTCA guidance into the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan. Stakeholder outreach and meeting coordination will be provided by the project lead, Annique Bennett and the steering committee will work on meeting agendas,

action items and strategic goals set with guidance from the RTCA. Below is an initial list of organizations that will be contacted for inclusion in the development process:

**National, State, and Tribal Governments:**

- U.S. Forest Service, Skykomish Ranger District
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Washington Department of Transportation
- Point Elliott Treaty Tribes
- The Tulalip Tribes, Tribal Department of Natural Resources

**County and Local Governments:**

- Snohomish County
- King County
- City of Everett
- City of Snohomish
- City of Monroe
- Town of Skykomish
- Town of Index
- City of Sultan
- Town of Gold Bar

**Education and Youth Organizations:**

- Alderleaf Wilderness College
- East County Boys and Girls Club of America
- Monroe Public School District
- Sultan Education Foundation
- Everett Community College, East County Campus at Lake Tye
- Local Scout Chapters
- YMCA

**Businesses and Associations:**

- Sky Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Monroe Chamber of Commerce
- Snohomish Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Association
- Port of Everett
- Snohomish County Tourism Bureau and Sports Commission
- Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Co.
- Stevens Pass Greenway

**Recreation and Conservation Organizations:**

- American Whitewater
- Forterra
- American Rivers
- The Washington Water Trails Association
- The Washington Kayak Club
- National Water Trails Association
- Trout Unlimited
- Friends of Heybrook Ridge
- The Wilderness Society
- Washington Wild
- The Sierra Club
- Cascade Paddle Sports
- Backcountry Horseman
- WA Bikes
- Snohomish BIKES
- Earth Corps
- Paddle Trails Canoe Club
- Washington Recreational River Runners
- University Kayak Club

**B. Letters of Support:**

Please see the attached letters of support.

**National Park Service Assistance:****4. Answer:**

- a) What are the major challenges and overall needs of the project?
- b) What type of assistance are you seeking from National Park Service staff? Please include a short description of the specific project need(s) for each of the boxes checked. Prioritize the project's top needs in the description.

- ☐ Defining project vision and goals
- ☒ 3 Identifying and analyzing issues and opportunities
- ☐ Assessing and engaging partners and stakeholders
- ☐ Inventory and mapping of community resources
- ☒ 1 Priority setting and consensus building
- ☐ Identifying funding sources
- ☒ 4 Organizational development
- ☒ 2 Designing community outreach and participation strategies
- ☐ Planning (trail, park, open space, greenway, etc.)
- ☐ Other

**4. National Parks Service Assistance****A. What are the major challenges and overall needs of the project:**

Development of the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan requires technical expertise that can be provided by the National Parks Service. Snohomish County staff and the project steering committee specifically seek water trail planning meeting facilitation and technical guidance.

Though many members of the steering committee have experience with planning, community engagement, meeting facilitation, and development, the majority of the committee have no experience with the process of crafting a water trail concept plan. Dr. Thomas O'Keefe, Regional Director for American Whitewater, is the exception having just completed a plan for the Upper Nooksack River. The Sky to Sound Steering Committee also seeks support from the RTCA to assist with experienced facilitation of the water trail planning meetings to professionally guide the committee on a clear path toward plan development. Because contributions from user groups and the public will be essential in the concept planning process and to ensure a constructive dialog between multiple, sometimes competing stakeholders, the Sky to Sound Steering Committee would greatly benefit from professional facilitation. Finally, keeping participants engaged in the water trail development after the plan has been created will be challenging, but crucial, to the long term success of the concept plan.

**B. What type of assistance are you seeking from National Park Service staff:****1. Priority Setting and Consensus Building**

The project will initially include many different, and possibly competing, agendas. This input will require prioritization before the committee can proceed with planning. Support from RTCA staff with water trail planning experience will be invaluable in guiding the conversations with stakeholders as well as maintaining focus on the scope and intent of the project.

## **2. Designing Community Outreach and Participation Strategies**

The steering committee would also benefit from guidance by RTCA staff on how to effectively conduct meetings on such a wide variety of subjects and locations, while incorporating the necessary participants in each. The design of these meetings will influence action items and agendas of future meetings.

## **3. Identifying and Analyzing Issues and Opportunities**

Because the steering committee lacks expertise on water trail planning, the RTCA can assist with suggestions and observations as the concept plan progresses. There will be steps in the process where this guidance will be helpful to introduce new considerations for the committee's input.

## **4. Organizational Development**

No official oversight committee for the waterway currently exists. As the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan develops, the steering committee would like input and suggestions regarding the development and responsibilities of a committee that will implement the final plan.

5. Describe how your project advances one or more key National Park Service strategic initiatives. Projects that contribute to one or more of these strategic initiatives are given emphasis in the project selection process.
  - a) Builds partnerships with health and wellness organizations to promote healthy parks and healthy people;
  - b) Engages youth or youth organizations to promote close-to-home resource conservation, stewardship, and outdoor recreation opportunities;
  - c) Develops and/or improves local connections to parks, rivers, trails, and greenways within urban areas;
  - d) Improves public access to National Park Service sites by enhancing connections to local communities;
  - e) Advances the conservation and stewardship of natural landscapes;
  - f) Expands public access to water resources, such as water trails, portages, and adjacent recreational opportunities.

## **5. NPS Strategic Initiatives**

### **B. Engages youth or youth organizations to promote close-to-home resource conservation, stewardship, and outdoor recreation opportunities.**

The proposed Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan can provide new multi-faceted educational, recreational, and stewardship opportunities by increasing awareness of the waterway within local communities. Many of the agencies engaged with the steering committee already connect with volunteer recreation and conservation organizations to provide educational components for youth to learn about habitat, environmental considerations, and the culturally significant aspects of the waterway. New stewardship programs can be suggested as the waterway inventory progresses to engage students from area communities with recreation and conservation organizations. As the concept plan is being developed there will be additional opportunities for input from youth, schools, and youth-centered organizations.

### **C. Develops and/or improves connections to parks, rivers, trails, and greenways in diverse urban areas and communities with limited resources and facilities.**

Along its 84 mile route, the proposed Sky to Sound Water Trail will adjoin and complement numerous existing or planned park, trail, and river projects. The concept plan will provide assistance to these projects through the development of a comprehensive access and amenity inventory. For example, within the City of Everett, especially near the port, mixed-use residential and commercial redevelopment is actively connecting the riverfront to the regional trail system. The Lowell historic

neighborhood is beginning riverfront expansion which will further extend the existing trail systems along the Snohomish River. As planning begins on future Port of Everett residential redevelopment, further access opportunities to the waterway are being considered. Further down the river, in the City of Sultan, Snohomish County Parks has purchased riverfront property that will become the Steelhead County Park. Preliminary planning has prioritized seasonal camping and water access to the Skykomish River.

In a partnership between the area communities and Forterra, the Great Northern Corridor project will expand and link trails near the north fork of the Skykomish River, such as the Sky Valley Trail in Sultan. This trail and the Sky to Sound Water Trail will both follow the route of the historic Great Northern Railroad. Additionally, the concept plan will support the expansion of current or prospective access points to the waterways. This includes restoring access to the Skykomish River via the Index-Galena Road which was washed out nearly a decade ago. This road is the only connection through Index to the Wild Sky Wilderness Area which has river put-ins and campgrounds, as well as hiking and mountaineering opportunities.

**F. Expands public access to water resources, such as creeks, rivers, lakes, bays and coasts, and the development of water trails.**

Of the 33 prospective total access points to be included in the Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan to date, seven have yet to be developed for public use. The 84 mile Sky to Sound Water Trail Concept Plan will also include information and planning for future investments along the waterways. Developing key access points along the rivers will greatly impact public users and outfitters currently seeking to take multi-day trips down the waterway, informing them of public versus private access points. Plans for added facilities and parking along the waterway are also necessary to reduce the environmental pressures associated with inappropriate or incorrect river access. These recommendations will be encapsulated in the plan for future implementation.